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13. — *Tracts and other Papers, relating principally to the Origin, Settlement, and Progress of the Colonies in North America, from the Discovery of the Country to the Year 1776.* Collected by PETER FORCE. Vol. I. Washington. 1836. 8vo. pp. 364.

WE hardly know of a more important service that can be rendered to the cause of useful knowledge in this country, than the collecting and reprinting of scarce documents relating to its early history. Of these the number is vast, far exceeding what any one whose attention has not been particularly drawn to the subject, would be led to suppose. No nation, indeed, ancient or modern, possesses such abundant materials as ours, for an authentic and minute account of its origin and growth. From the very first planting of Virginia and New England, many of the leading colonists were accustomed to keep journals of the daily occurrences and transactions, that attended their hard and perilous enterprise. Individuals too, who, from curiosity, or for purposes of traffic and gain, occasionally visited these parts, drew up narratives of the condition and progress of the new settlements; and both of these classes of papers were, from time to time, sent home, and printed in small pamphlets in England. Passing over Governor Winthrop's "Journal," which remained in the country, and was preserved to lie in manuscript, we would now simply refer to the document which passes under the name (for what reason, is at this time unknown,) of "Mourt's Relation," and to Edward Winslow's "Good News from New England"; which two papers present a detailed and most interesting narrative of the affairs of Plymouth Colony, for the first three years after the landing of the Fathers. These and similar documents relating to the discovery and colonization of the New World, it is well known, were collected, at the time they were printed, by the indefatigable Purchas, and published by him in an abridged form, in that invaluable storehouse of historical knowledge which he entitles, his "Pilgrimes." The number of these tracts and pamphlets, however, was so great, that even that immense repository could contain but a small part of them. After Purchas's day, what with the settlement of new colonies, and the outbreaking of the Indian wars, and the multiplication of colonial relations and interests, the works relating to this country accumulated to such a degree, that in the year 1713, a bare catalogue of their titles, published by Bishop Kennett, under the name of *Bibliothecæ Americanæ Primordia*, filled a quarto volume of 275 pages.

Having, for the most part, been printed in England, these early tracts have always been exceedingly rare in this country, very few of them probably having been imported; and of some of them, even to this day, not a single copy is known to exist on this side of the Atlantic. Who among us, for instance, has ever seen John Brereton's "Brief and true Relation of the Discoverie of the North Part of Virginia, (i. e. New England,) made this present year 1602, by Captain Bartholomew Gosnold," which contains a particular account of Gosnold's discovery and naming of Cape Cod, and of his attempt to effect the first settlement in New England by establishing a colony upon that one of the Elizabeth Islands, now known by the euphonious appellation of Cuttyhunk? Who has ever seen John Clarke's (physician of Rhode Island,) "Ill News from New England, or a Narrative of New England Persecution, wherein it is declared, that while Old England is becoming new, New England is becoming old," — a work which the learned editor of Winthrop's "Journal" tells us he has sought for in vain in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and fears it is irrecoverably lost; though we happen to know that this, as well as the other work just mentioned, is perfectly safe in London, in Colonel Aspinwall's valuable collection of books relating to America? Who in this country has ever seen the Apostle Eliot's "Christian Commonwealth," a book which the General Court of Massachusetts, in their prudence, ordered him to retract, and took effectual measures to suppress, but one copy of which, however, escaped, and is preserved in the same collection? * Who has ever seen William Pinchon's "Meritorious Price of Man's Redemption," which the General Court ordered to be burnt on Boston Common? Who has ever seen the notorious Sam. Gorton's book, with the quaint, lengthy, and, to us, somewhat unintelligible title, "Saltmarsh returned from the dead in Amico Philalethe, or the Resurrection of James the Apostle, out of the grave of carnal glosses, the correction of the universal apostate, which cruelly buried him who yet liveth, appearing in the comely ornaments of his fifth chapter, in an exercise, June 4th, 1654. Having laid by his grave clothes, in

* This collection, comprising 771 distinct works, ought, in some way or other, to be obtained for the Library of Harvard College. That institution is indebted to the munificence of two of the citizens of Boston, for securing for its use, the valuable historical libraries of Ebeling and Warden. Is there no one among us, equally enlightened and patriotic, who will complete that almost perfect department of the Library, and fill up its few remaining chasms, by adding Colonel Aspinwall's Collection to those just mentioned, and at the same time enroll his own name, with those of Israel Thorndike and Samuel A. Eliot, among the principal benefactors of the University?

a despised village, remote from England, but wishing well, and heartily desiring the true prosperity thereof?" A hundred similar books, of great interest and rarity, might be mentioned, the possession of which is indispensable to one who would undertake to write the history of the country, or would understand thoroughly the character and spirit of our forefathers. Yet where will he go to find them? The only depositories in this country where he could look for them with any reasonable prospect of success, (and for many of them, we know by experience, that he would there search in vain,) are the libraries of Harvard University, the Boston Athenæum, and the Massachusetts Historical Society.

It is to the Society just named, that we are indebted for the first attempt to multiply copies of these early papers. From its establishment in 1790, when their first volume was published, down to the present day, when their twenty-fifth volume is just ready to appear, the members of that Society, amidst their other judicious and praiseworthy labors, have kept this object steadily in view; and their Collections, accordingly, contain reprints of many rare and curious historical documents, which persons in general can have access to in no other form. In this useful work, they have had faithful and industrious followers, in the Historical Societies of New York, Pennsylvania, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Maine.

Although we are of opinion, that such publications can be conducted with more judgment, and with a much greater prospect of continuance, by a body of men, associated from their common interest in historical inquiries, yet, at the same time, we are not unmindful of what has been done in this department by individuals, nor are we insensible to the value of the papers collected by Governor Hutchinson, Hazard, and more recently by Messrs. Farmer and Moore of New Hampshire. We are always glad to see new laborers entering into this wide field of historical investigation; and we therefore welcome the appearance of the volume, which is named at the head of this article, and which has just issued from the press under the direction of Mr. Peter Force, a gentleman well known for his love of antiquarian research, and his extensive and familiar acquaintance with the sources of American history. It appears to be the first of a proposed series of volumes, that shall embrace pamphlets and smaller tracts, relating to the origin, settlement, and progress of the North American Colonies. The present volume contains thirteen distinct papers. The first five, occupying more than half the volume, relate to the planting and growth of the colony of Georgia, and, with a single exception, are reprints from tracts

published in London, from 1717 to 1742. Of the eight remaining papers, six relate to the settlement of Virginia, and detail the affairs and troubles of that colony from 1609 to 1676. Two of the thirteen documents, are now for the first time printed from the manuscripts; they are, however, brief, one containing only four pages, and are, comparatively, of little value.

Considering that the materials for a volume of this sort are so abundant, as we have already shown, we deem it a subject of regret that the editor should have thought fit to insert any document which had previously been reprinted in this country. This, however, he has done in three instances, and in two of them without informing his readers of the fact. In regard to the Narrative of Bacon's and Ingram's Rebellion in Virginia, (a tract of forty-eight pages, originally published in the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,) he may, indeed, plead as an apology, that the reprint was necessary from its connexion with the new matter, on the same subject, which he has now, for the first time, brought together in a volume. We are, however, inclined to the belief, that a simple reference to the volume where the Narrative might be found, would be quite enough for all useful purposes. At any rate, we can see no good reason for reprinting "The New Life of Virginea," and Francis Higgeson's "New England's Plantation," both of which are included in the Collections of the abovenamed Society. If reprinted at all, they ought certainly to be reprinted entire. Yet in the former of these tracts, the letter of Graves, the Engineer, appended at the close, is omitted; and four pages, appended in like manner to the latter tract, share the same fate; so that the Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society furnish not only the prior, but the more accurate copy of these two papers.

With these slight abatements, we regard the volume before us as a very valuable contribution to the materials of our early history, and as highly creditable to the capacity and diligence of the editor. We are not unacquainted with the difficulties and vexations that attend the publication of works of this kind, and we therefore the more cheerfully accord to him the praise which he deserves, for what he has so generously undertaken and so faithfully executed. We sincerely hope, that he will meet with sufficient encouragement to induce him to go on with this laudable, though not lucrative, enterprise; and all that we would request is, that in his future volumes he would go a little further back for his materials, and reprint nothing that is already accessible in other forms.

We intended, had the limits of this article permitted, to

give some account of another work projected by Mr. Force, in connexion with Matthew St. Clair Clarke, under a contract with the Government of the United States, to be entitled, "The Documentary History of the Revolution," a work, the plan of which is gigantic, and the execution of which would be a task truly Herculean. The plan contemplates the publishing of every document relating to the history of the United States, whether printed or manuscript, from the origin of the colonies down to the adoption of the Federal Constitution. The work will occupy at least twenty folio volumes, and the cost of fifteen hundred copies is estimated at four hundred and eight thousand dollars. We hope that the work, in some modified form, will go on; although we very much fear that this large historical drag-net will sweep up some rubbish, as well as much valuable material. Should the first volume ever appear, we shall take an opportunity to go more at large into the subject.

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14. — *Boston Journal of Natural History; containing Papers and Communications, read to the Boston Society of Natural History, and published by their Direction.* Vol. I. Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Boston; Hilliard, Gray, & Co. 1834 — 1836.

THAT the Boston Society of Natural History have only published three numbers of their Journal, comprising three hundred and sixty pages of the first volume, in three years, is pretty conclusive evidence, that there is as yet no very strong interest in our community, in the objects and researches of natural science. Few can write, with the requisite knowledge, in any department of Natural History; and those few who can, and who do, must be content to read and to pay for their own writings, with very little coöperation from the public. This is not stated, however, as a matter of complaint, but of fact only. We are perfectly aware that in a new, busy, driving community like ours, Natural History must wait patiently, and for a long while, before it receives any great share of attention. Its growth must be slow, because there are so many other things which overtop and overshadow it. We are not surprised, therefore, that we so rarely see a number of the Boston Society's Journal. But we shall certainly be surprised, if in the next three years we should see no more than three other numbers, and shall be disposed to enter a complaint, either against the Society, or against the public.

The uses of a Journal of Natural History must be obvious on the least consideration. It is a depository of facts and observa-